Online ISSN 2581-785X

Original Research

International Research Journal of Ayurveda & Yoga
Vol. 9, No. 6, November–December 2026

Undergraduate Students' Experiences of Raja Yoga Practice for Managing Academic Stress and Anxiety

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https://doi.org/10.48165/irjay.2026.9.06.07

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received: 03.09.2026
Revised: 23.09.2026
Accepted: 22.10.2026

Keywords
Raja Yoga
academic stress
anxiety
undergraduate students
qualitative research
thematic analysis

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study focused on the experience of the students in practicing Raja Yoga to alleviate academic stress and anxiety, and the factors that facilitated or prevented continued practice of Raja Yoga. A total of 16 undergraduates (10 male and 6 female) aged between 18 and 22 who had between 3 and 12 months of work experience were interviewed. The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed and analyzed thematically. A set of four themes were created: Academic pressure; Learning to watch the mind; Calm in the examination hall; and Practice as a daily anchor. The initial scepticism, limited time and space, interrupted practice and expectations of rapid improvement was a cross cutting issue of doubt and difficulty. The participants reported that they had become aware of their anxious thinking without automatically following it, that they were less anxious before exams, and that through practice they were able to organise the study day. The experiences were uneven, with P8 noticing relief from feeling physically aroused, continuing to worry about results. The above narrative accounts do not measure treatment effects or improvements to academic performance; they are based on perceptions. These findings recommend that there should be opportunities for students to become familiar with voluntary student support programmes, providing time for students to learn about their spiritual preferences as well as practical limitations associated with support, and that academic and counselling support should be available.

INTRODUCTION

Academic stress and anxiety have become ordinary features of undergraduate life rather than exceptional events. In a study of health science students, 88.40% of the students reported that they had been worried or nervous and had devised coping measures [1]. Among 449 undergraduate health science students, 65% had stress, 85.1% had anxiety and 51.4% had depression [2]. The same study notes that stress, anxiety and depression have a negative impact on the learning and academic performance of university students [2]. Stress in this population is therefore not only a wellbeing concern but also an academic one.

Universities have responded by offering a range of non-pharmacological programmes, and the strongest evidence concerns practices that combine movement, breathing and meditation. A meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials with tertiary education students reported a post-test effect size for anxiety of 0.46, although the effect decreased to 0.13 when interventions were compared with an active control [3]. A systematic review reported in a master's dissertation, covering 12 experimental studies with 1,660 participants, concluded that yoga reduced stress most clearly, followed by anxiety and, to a lesser

extent, depression [4]. In one experimental study with medical students, anxiety scores on the GAD-7 dropped from 13.4 to 5.8 over eight weeks of practice [4]. A smaller six-week programme with 17 college students found that anxiety and stress scores decreased significantly alongside an increase in mindfulness [5]. These results are encouraging, but reviewers have also warned that the certainty of the evidence base is often very low [6].

Raja Yoga differs in important ways from the posture-based programmes that dominate this literature. It is commonly practised with open eyes and is intended to be integrated into ordinary daily life rather than restricted to formal, eyes-closed sessions [7]. The practice involves open-eyed introspection, positive affirmations, and a connection with the Supreme Soul [8]. Because it requires no mat, no special clothing, and no studio, it is well suited to students who live in shared rooms and keep irregular hours. A comparative study found that students who received Raj Yoga training showed a statistically significant enhancement in their ability to sustain attention compared with a non-meditating group [9].

What this literature does not provide is an account of how students themselves understand and use the practice. Recent work on Rajyoga and students has been designed as a qualitative, descriptive analysis supported by secondary sources [10], which means that the student voice is largely absent. Where qualitative methods have been used with students, the focus has been on mindfulness-based programmes, and the value of such work lies in showing how practice becomes meaningful in the details of study life. A study of 29 university students in a mindfulness-based stress reduction programme for academic evaluation anxiety identified themes such as finding an inner source of calm and moving from fear to curiosity in academic learning [11]. This study takes a similar approach with Raja Yoga and asks two questions. First, how do undergraduate students describe their experience of Raja Yoga practice in relation to academic stress and anxiety? Second, what helps and what hinders their continued practice during a demanding academic year?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Classical roots: Patanjali and Vivekananda

Raja Yoga is not a recent creation, and its academic use rests on two figures who are usually named together. The classical source is the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, described as a historic text of Raja Yoga composed around the start of the common era, in which Patanjali described yoga as the stilling of the distorted fluctuations or ruminations in the mind, which are the sources of suffering [12]. The second aphorism of that text states that yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind [13], and the multicomponent process is aimed at training the mind to be effortlessly quiet, focused, and self-aware [12]. Patanjali's Raja Yoga has eight limbs, known as Ashtanga Yoga [14], and the system is commonly listed as a set of eight steps: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi [15]. The same limbs are glossed as moral observances in relation to others, self-discipline in relation to the self, physical postures and exercises, breath regulation, withdrawal of the senses, concentration, meditation and self-transcendence [12]. Raja Yoga is therefore best read as an eight-step path of self-regulation rather than as a single technique of sitting silently.

The second figure is Swami Vivekananda, whose book Raja Yoga, published in 1896, is usually credited with starting the yoga renaissance of the late nineteenth century and is described as a watershed moment when he translated and popularised the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali for readers in the East and the West [16]. Vivekananda's account of the four main yogas treats Raja Yoga as the yoga of concentration, alongside Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jnana Yoga [17]. He described Raja Yoga as the science of concentration based on the principles set out in Patanjali's sutras [17], and his teaching of the four yogas was interpreted in the light of Advaita Vedanta metaphysics [18]. He argued for a practice that could be followed within ordinary household life, so that yoga served both spiritual growth and social welfare [18]. Writers also observe that he was more a populariser than a scholar of Indian philosophy [19], and that placing Patanjali's system close to other philosophical traditions carries a risk of assuming commitments that are absent from the sutras [19].

The historical traditions above provide context for interpreting attention and self-regulation; they should not be treated as identical to every contemporary Rajyoga programme. The open-eyed practice described in this study is associated with positive reflection and a connection with the Supreme Soul [8]. The analysis therefore attends to participants' own descriptions of observing thoughts and using brief practice in daily life, without assuming that findings about the full eight-limbed system establish the effects of this particular practice.

Academic stress and anxiety among undergraduates

Research consistently shows that academic stressors are a leading source of distress for university students. In a review of prevalence data, moderate to extremely severe anxiety among undergraduates ranged from 51.5% to 55.0% in Malaysian samples, and the top stressors chosen by students were mainly academic and personal factors [20]. The authors consider that the data obtained in a student group indicate high levels of nervousness and tension during the semester, as 93.7% of the group experienced moments of nervousness during the semester [21]. The pattern is consistent across settings, so interventions cannot be viewed as an add-on. Coping style is also related to stress. Students who used emotion-focused coping (avoiding problems, worrying too much) were described as going into a vicious cycle of stress and anxiety [22]. This observation is relevant to the present study as students frequently refer to meditation practices as interrupting, not treating, that cycle rather than treating a disorder.

Meditation and Yoga as Interventions

There is a wide array of intervention literature, but not all of it is of equal quality. This evidence from the meta-analysis indicates moderate effectiveness for depression, anxiety, and stress in tertiary students, effects that diminish when comparison groups are active versus a waiting condition [3]. It was found that yoga had a beneficial effect in the study, and that the combined intervention consisting of yoga (physical practices, breathing exercises, and meditation) was significantly effective; Hatha Yoga was the most studied form, and yoga interventions lasted for 6 to 12 weeks [4]. Concurrently, the evidence level for yoga in anxiety disorders has been rated as very low, and interventions were highly heterogeneous, as well as the self-report questionnaires [6]. Therefore, reviews should be looked at with a degree of caution and not necessarily taken as a definitive statement about mechanism or dose.

Raja Yoga: practice and rationale

Raja Yoga, or Rajyoga, is rooted in classical yogic philosophy and is taught in contemporary settings by institutions such as the Brahma Kumaris. Its distinguishing features are the open eyed method, the use of positive affirmations, and the cultivation of a connection with the Supreme Soul [8]. Physiologically, the practice has been studied as a state that alters autonomic regulation, with cardiorespiratory measures used to describe changes associated with the practice [7]. For students, the practical attraction is portability. The practice can be done in a few minutes before an examination or during a study break, without equipment or a teacher present, which is consistent with its intended integration into daily life [7].

Empirical work on Raja Yoga in educational settings is growing but thin. A comparative study of 60 students aged between 15–18 years found that those who received twelve weeks of Raj Yoga training showed a statistically significant enhancement in sustained attention compared with a non-meditating group [9]. A mixed methods study with high school students in Andhra Pradesh investigated how 12 weeks of regular Rajayoga meditation practice affect cognitive functions including sustained attention, working memory, and emotional regulation [23]. These studies establish plausibility, but they are conducted with school students, and almost none examines undergraduate study conditions, where assessment is continuous, deadlines overlap and much learning happens alone.

Qualitative accounts of practice

Qualitative studies of meditation with students describe change in terms of meaning rather than symptom counts. The themes reported in the mindfulness study of academic evaluation anxiety, which include finding an inner source of calm and moving from fear to curiosity in academic learning, show that students experience practice as a shift in their relationship to study rather than simply as a reduction in symptoms [11]. A thematic analysis of structured interviews with 43 students in an institutional wellness club reported reduced stress and increased feelings of fulfillment from regular yoga practice [24]. The same literature documents scepticism before practice begins. In a study of yoga meditation with female college students, most remained skeptical before starting meditation and doubted whether they could benefit from simple relaxation exercises [22].

Barriers to continued practice

Barriers to meditation include low perceived benefit, inadequate knowledge, pragmatic challenges and sociocultural conflict [25]. In student settings, perceived lack of time and uncertainty about benefit can hinder engagement [26]. Digital availability does not ensure continued participation [27]. A six-week programme involving students, staff and faculty at a medical university reported 20% discontinuation [28]. These different populations and programme designs

should not be treated as interchangeable; they support examining how students explain engagement in their own setting.

The present study

The reviewed literature suggests a need for accounts of undergraduate Raja Yoga practice in everyday study conditions, including the negotiation of obstacles. Two research questions guide this study. RQ1 asks: How do undergraduate students describe Raja Yoga practice in relation to academic stress and anxiety? Sections 4.1–4.4 address this question through the four themes. RQ2 asks: What supports and hinders continued practice during a demanding academic year? Section 4.5 examines these conditions across the themes, including perceived usefulness, routines, initial doubt, time and space constraints, interruptions and limited benefit. This organisation treats the cross-cutting pattern as an explicit answer to RQ2 rather than as an additional numbered theme.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The design in this study was qualitative descriptive with an interpretivist position. Qualitative description was selected because the intent was to create an accurate description of experience and not to construct theory or test a hypothesis, in the style of the participant.

Setting and participants

The research was carried out in an Indian maritime education and training institute based in a university. The research was done in a maritime education and training institution in India which was affiliated with a university. Eligibility was determined by a brief screening conversation before recruitment, conducted by the researcher. Students were asked about their undergraduate enrollment, how long they have been practicing Raja Yoga, how many times per day they practice Raja Yoga, if they felt there were any academic stressors or anxiety over school in the past academic year, and if they were currently undergoing treatment for an anxiety disorder. Self-report was used to determine eligibility. Inclusion involved at least three months to 12 months of practice and practice at least three times per week, and students with a diagnosed anxiety disorder were excluded and referred to the university counselling services. The total number of students was sixteen: 10 males and six females, second- and third-year, and with practice from three months to a year. The majority were taught the practice by a university course taught by a holistic development trainer or a meditation group on the campus. P8 achieved the practice-frequency requirement at recruitment but reported reduced training, twice weekly, during a later period of academic challenge. The latter story is about the variation of engagement, not the initial engagement frequency.

Sampling

A purposive sampling (with a snowball element) was applied. Initial contact was via a campus meditation group, and participants of the interview were requested to pass on study information to other eligible students. A total of 16 subjects were included in the final sample. The sample was judged in terms of the focus of the research questions, the relatively limited number of participants, and the depth and relevance of accounts, and not by statistical representativeness or some universal number [29]. A definite claim to data saturation is not made because the available documentation does not provide a sufficiently detailed interview-by-interview record of code development to support this.

Data collection

The data were gathered by conducting individual semi-structured interviews of 35-50 min, in a quiet room on campus or via online request. An interview guide was designed incorporating open questions and probes. The first question had participants write a description of a typical day of that stressful time in the semester. Later questions included how they got to practice, what they observed while they meditated and after they meditated, how they applied the practice during exams, what got in their way, and what they would recommend to another student. Interviews were tape-recorded with the interviewer's permission and transcribed word-for-word. The setting, participants' attitudes, and any interruptions were recorded in field notes, which were used during analysis. A reconstructed guide, keyed to the interview topics reported, is available in Appendix A. Explicitly communicates the scope and neutral language of the questions and distinguishes it from a verified verbatim copy of the original instrument.

Data analysis

The thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke [30] was used to analyse the transcripts with six phases: familiarisation with data, initial coding,

searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, writing the report. During the first stage, each transcript was listened to twice with no coding, and a short memo was written. In the second phase, initial codes were created for the data set, using in vivo labels when possible. The third phase involved grouping codes into themes and drawing a thematic map. In the 4th stage, themes were rechecked against the coded extracts and then against the entire data set, in which two were combined and one was discarded due to the lack of support. During the fifth phase, definitions, names, and illustrations were given to each theme. The current account is the sixth in a series of accounts that will eventually be published. Coding was inductive, and analysis was not carried out within a pre-defined theoretical framework of stress. First coding and generation of candidate themes was done by the researcher. The supervisor read through thematic interpretations and pertinent extracts, some of which were negative. Assumptions and their interpretations were challenged through discussion. This was not independent duplicate coding nor was interrater reliability computed. It was examined whether negative reports were analyzed along with positive reports to consider the boundaries of the interpretation and it could not be claimed that a separately audited search procedure was carried out.

Reflexivity and ethics

The researcher is a Ph.D.scholar. This is an insider perspective that facilitated rapport but might also bias towards positive interpretations. The safeguards reported were to probe for difficulty and disappointment, to keep a reflexive journal, and for the supervisor to review material from the negative cases. A piece of information was given to the participants and they were informed that they could withdraw without providing any reason. Names were changed to codes P1–P16, details were deleted when transcribing, and recordings and transcripts were kept on a password-protected device only accessible to the researcher. Participants gave informed consent prior to the interviews. This study did not gain formal ethics committee approval. The voluntary participation of participants is not a substitute for formal ethics review; the lack of formal ethics review is recognised as a limitation.

RESULTS

Four themes were developed: Academic pressure; Learning to watch the mind; Calm in the examination hall; and Practice as a daily anchor. Sections 4.1–4.4 address RQ1. Section 4.5 addresses RQ2 by examining the cross-cutting conditions that supported or disrupted practice, including doubt, practical constraints, and uneven benefit.

Theme 1 Academic pressure

The participants reported that stress was something that comes into the body before being recognised as a thought. The most frequently reported indicators were difficulty breathing, insomnia, an overactive mind at night, and lack of motivation to start work. P3 commented on the trend of the previous semester: “When we hand in work together, I don’t sleep well, I lie down, and I think: ’What work have I not done?’ In the morning I can’t open the book at all.” P11 talked about comparison with other batchmates, and some participants associated this with anxiety; “I don’t see how I can compare myself to other classmates, because this does not look like a competition in my mind”.

The pressure was said to be ongoing (not episodic). P7: “The exam day is not the only time. After the middle of the semester there is this background noise in the head, kind of like a fan noise — it never goes away.” Two participants indicated that they had thought about dropping out of a subject due to the workload, and one indicated that they had seen their campus doctor for headaches. In this theme, participants felt a sense of being trapped in a cycle of worry and avoidance, which was described as being stuck in a “stressful day”.

Theme 2 Learning to watch the mind

The second theme refers to the main skill that participants identified with Raja Yoga, “observing thoughts without pursuing them.” Participants used the concept of separation, distance. “Earlier, I was just thinking; now I can see it coming and I can choose whether to sit with it or not,” P2 added. P14 used to describe this as a small space between the worry and the self and that this space increased with time as they practiced.

Participants linked the practice to noticing distraction and returning to study. The account attributed to P6 concerned recognising an impulse to use a phone; because its wording is unclear in the manuscript, it is summarised rather than reproduced as a verbatim extract. The material also describes responding to a low mark by identifying a mistake and moving to the next subject. The speaker attribution for that account is unclear, so it is not presented as an attributed quotation. For those trained at a

centre, observing thoughts without judgment and gently returning attention were described as helpful instructions. P5 said: "Do not fight the thought, step aside from the thought." These accounts concern a changed relationship to mental content rather than the disappearance of stress.

Theme 3 Calm in the examination hall

The third theme is the application of the practice in tough times. The majority of participants reported that they would have a brief practice session before they went into the examination room, typically 2–5 minutes of sitting quietly with their eyes open, repeating a positive thought. P10 said: "When I go in, my hands haven't shaken by the time I'm on the bench; I say to myself for 3 minutes: I have prepared myself, I am calm." A similar routine was described by P13 before a viva: "My voice was cool, and I was able to think of what to say rather than thinking about the examiner. I did not just come to that point all of a sudden."

Two participants, when they were feeling stuck during the exam, reported using the practice. P1 said, "I close my eyes for 10 seconds, which is the time limit, and I try again. It isn't knowledge that I need — I close my eyes; it is PANIC." They also reported engaging in this practice prior to presentations and during the gap between completing a paper and sharing the answers with friends – some of which were defined as a period of great anxiety. Not everything was good. P8 said that the practice had helped them to feel better when they had the physical symptoms of anxiety (but not when they worried about the results): "When I'm physically panicking, my breathing is better, but when I'm worried about the results, it didn't help with that.

Theme 4 Practice as a daily anchor

The fourth theme is about the way the practice was a 'routine' that structured the day. The majority of participants practised in the early morning (10–20 minutes) before the hostel or the commute demanded. P4: "If I do it in the morning, the whole day is different; if I don't do it, by evening I'm irritated with everybody." P15 said that it was a means of beginning study: "Sometimes I sit, meditate, and then open the books - now it's one action like warming up."

Participants also reported other improvements in their lives beyond stress, such as sleep improvements, less reactivity with roommates, and self-acceptance. P12 said: "When I don't meet the target for the day, I am less angry with myself." P16 correlated the discipline of daily practice with discipline of study: "If I can sit for 15 minutes a day, I can sit for 2 hours with one subject."

Supports and barriers to continued practice

Doubt and difficulty appeared in every theme and are reported here as a cross-cutting pattern. Participants described initial scepticism, which often came from family or friends who treated meditation as either religious or useless. P2 said: "My father asked why I am wasting time sitting with eyes closed when I have a paper." P11 said that at first she thought the practice was only for older people with nothing to do.

Practical obstacles centred on time and space. P16, who shared a room with three students, said: "There is no quiet place. I practise with earphones and even then someone is talking." P7 said they gave up sitting during the month of examination: "For 20 days I never sat. From there on, I had to do it all over again." Two participants indicated that they felt that the results did not come with a swift enough pace and that they ceased following within a week if there was no perceived calmness. P3: "For the first 10 days nothing happened. I just kept going on because my teacher ordered me to keep going for a month."

P8 provides the clearest documented account of limited benefit: "I do it twice per week at best and I can't say that it's improved my stress at all." Read alongside P8's distinction in Section 4.3 between easier breathing during physical panic and continuing worry about results, this suggests uneven perceived effects across different aspects of distress. Infrequent practice alone cannot explain this difference, and the accounts do not establish whether low engagement preceded limited benefit or followed disappointment. P7's interruption during examinations suggests that practice opportunities could narrow when pressure increased. The original account referred to a second participant reporting little benefit, but no supporting extract or identifiable case description was supplied; that case is not used as independent corroboration. The interpretation therefore rests on the documented divergent material and avoids inferring a minimum effective dose or blaming participants for non-benefit.

DISCUSSION

The findings are not in relation to the effectiveness of Raja Yoga for reducing clinical anxiety, but to its applicability within academic life. The following is suggested by the Academic pressure, learning to watch the mind, Calm in the examination hall, and Practice as a daily anchor: notice a stress response, pause in the moment before reacting, and return to a study activity. This sequence is proposed based on

retrospective reports; it is not a proven causal process. It builds upon qualitative research that examined academic evaluation anxiety by revealing the students' experience of finding practice in exams and transitions to study and living together [11].

The mechanism proposed is primarily attentional and metacognitive. In Learning to Watch the mind, students talked about experiencing something they described as 'distance from anxious thoughts.' Decentring research involves being aware of mental events, while reducing identification with mental events and reactivity to the content of mental events [33]. The present accounts are consistent with that model, but the interviews failed to assess these processes and establish mediation. This is consistent with the more general literature on self-regulation, which suggests that there are interrelated cognitive, emotional, and bodily routes to yoga [12]. Raja Yoga might have served as a means for participants to break the cycle of worry, arousal and avoidance; it is not possible to ascertain which aspect was most significant from the data.

This is a difference between the settling of the body, and a change in the meaning of an examination, which is illustrated by the calm in the examination hall. The implications of uniformly decreased anxiety are hampered by the fact that the anxiety level of P8 was lower, while their breathing was easier. A brief time out can be useful to help to awaken them and to keep undecided what marks, preparation or consequences will follow. This boundary aligns with caution in intervention reviews, in which effects are inconsistent across comparison conditions and evidence certainty is low [3, 6]. It also leaves open non-specific explanations, including expectation, rest and a familiar routine.

The physiological results of the trained Rajyoga practitioners give another line of evidence for the autonomic changes related to the state [7]. They have not verified the interviewees' responses as physiological readings and they have not produced the same response in undergraduates as in them, nor demonstrated that anxiety changes persist. Likewise, the anchor of Practice captures the organisation and readiness to study, as perceived by them. It is not able to improve working memory, sustained attention, grades or examination performance. Comparisons with test-based studies should therefore aim to point to other questions of the study that are complementary instead of trying to equate perceived concentration with measured cognitive improvement [9].

Perceived benefit and opportunities to practise can be seen to influence each other in the cross-cutting accounts. Note-taking may be encouraged by recognition of value, whereas time pressure, common space and disappointment can hinder involvement. This relationship was retrospective, and the direction and intensity is unknown. The common barriers to meditation found in international research include practical barriers, such as lack of time, and perceived barriers to meditation, such as lack of interest [25] and varied preferences for delivery found in a six-week study in a medical university community [28] (20% people discontinued meditation). The present results offer a contextual description of the experience of interruption during examinations but do not provide evidence that persistence leads to benefits.

The practical outcome is offering and setting realistic expectations, providing short practice times, and offering options for shared living spaces and exams. Raja Yoga spiritual terminology should be made clear to students, and participation should be mindful of students' beliefs and preferences. If it is reported that limited benefit has been seen, discussion should focus on individuals' needs; increasing practice should not be imposed. Academic workload support and access to counselling is still essential as academic stressors and ongoing worry are not always alleviated by meditation.

Further studies should follow students throughout a semester and should involve dropouts, regular users and intermittent users. Further interviews might explore the relationship of perceived benefit to adherence or the relationship of adherence to perceived benefit, and the complementary use of prospective practice records and validated stress measures will be explored. Appropriate outcome measures and comparison designs would be needed for studies aimed at assessing cognitive or academic outcomes. A discussion of divergent cases would clarify for whom, when, and for what part(s) of stress the practice would be felt to be useful.

LIMITATIONS

The sample of 16 was purposively drawn from one of the maritime education and training institutes. Yoga could have a different professional discipline, living environment, and/or exposure to yoga through coursework when compared to other undergraduate environments, reducing transferability. If students are recruited from a meditation group or self-selected, then they might be more likely to be predisposed to meditation. However, without a complete group of discontinuers, the understanding of the acceptability

and non-benefit is further limited. These selection effects do not go away when you have conflicting reports. The direction and amount of recall bias cannot be determined for retrospective accounts because they may exaggerate differences between distress in the past and the lack of distress at the present time, or may reconstruct unsuccessful experiences with later disappointment. When accounts are reported in English, there may be a loss of nuance in English and Hindi interviews. Possible interpretive bias due to the researcher's insider position and lack of independent duplicate coding or external analytic audit despite reflexive safeguards, supervisory audits, and participant validation. There is no independent credible claim for saturation in the documentation. Eligibility does not ensure continued participation, as shown by changes in practice frequency following recruitment. There are no direct measures of clinical anxiety, cognition or academic performance, and the effects of Raja Yoga can't be disentangled from its expectation, social contact, pausing or routine. In this study, no formal ethics committee approval was obtained, even though the participants provided their consent; thus, the study did not receive the independent ethical review that would have been provided by ethics committee.

CONCLUSION

This study is unique in that it includes a description of the place of Raja Yoga in the daily lives of 16 undergraduate students, as placed under the pressure of academic learning, thought, observation and exam preparation. Its contribution is its ability to capture the difference between the sense of immediate calm and ongoing concern, as well as the practical circumstances that enabled or impeded use. Findings on student support services suggest that an optional introduction that meets the requirements for time and space, explains the service and is clearly explained, is appropriate and complements academic and counselling services is most beneficial. More in-depth, qualitative study, involving all discontinuers, is required to further explore changes in experiences and engagement over the course of a semester, as well as the boundaries of what perceived usefulness of the practice is limited to.

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How to Cite this Article: Ghuge A.. (2026). Undergraduate Students' Experiences of Raja Yoga Practice for Managing Academic Stress and Anxiety. *International Research Journal of Ayurveda & Yoga*, ***9***(6), 45-53. https://doi.org/10.48165/irjay.2026.9.06.07